



## NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

### THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN

**Follow these procedures:** If requested by your instructor, please include an assignment cover sheet. This will become the first page of your assignment. In addition, your assignment header should include your last name, first initial, course code, dash, and assignment number. This should be left justified, with the page number right justified. For example:

DoeJXXX0000-1

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**Save a copy of your assignments:** You may need to re-submit an assignment at your instructor's request. Make sure you save your files in accessible location.

**Academic integrity:** All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

**EDU7707-8**

**Dr. Leslie Oja**

**Planning Dissertation Research in  
Education**

**Activity #5 Re-submission #2: Develop a  
Problem Statement and Research  
Questions**

**Comments: Re-submission – Submission #2**

### Northcentral University Grading Guidelines – Graduate Scoring

Numerical Points	Letter Grade	Descriptor	Explanation
100-94 93-90	A A-	Excellent	Completes <b>all</b> required parts of the assignment, demonstrates <b>deep</b> understanding of materials, uses <b>very</b> clear and effective expression appropriate to scholarly writing, and has <b>very few or no</b> errors in grammar, mechanics, APA form and style, and APA formatting.
89-87	B+	Good	Completes <b>all or most</b> required parts of the assignment, demonstrates <b>good</b> understanding of readings, uses <b>mostly</b>

86 - 83	B		clear and effective expression appropriate to scholarly writing, and has <b>few</b> errors in grammar, mechanics, APA form and style, and APA formatting.
82-80 79-77	B- C+	Fair	Completes <b>most</b> required parts of the assignment, demonstrates <b>some</b> understanding of the readings, and writing is <b>somewhat</b> clear, effective, and scholarly, and has <b>some</b> errors in grammar, mechanics, APA form and style, and APA formatting.
76-73	C	Poor	Completes <b>some</b> required parts of the assignment, demonstrates <b>some</b> understanding of readings, and writing is <b>difficult to understand</b> and <b>unscholarly</b> and has <b>several</b> errors in grammar, mechanics, APA form and style, and APA formatting.
72-0	F	Unacceptable	Completes <b>few</b> required parts of the assignment, demonstrates <b>little</b> understanding of readings, and writing is <b>difficult to understand</b> and <b>unscholarly</b> and has <b>many</b> errors in grammar, mechanics, APA form and style, and APA formatting.

### Using the Grading Guidelines for Success

**A.** The Northcentral University Grading Guidelines are designed to ensure that faculty and students have a shared understanding of assignment quality. Carefully reviewing the guidelines can help you plan and complete your assignments to the best of your ability.

**B.** The grading guidelines are based on four assignment criteria. Keep these in mind as you complete an assignment:

1. Assignment completion (highlighted in **orange**) – the extent to which you have followed assignment instructions.
2. Understanding of materials (highlighted in **green**) – the extent to which you have demonstrated understanding of readings or other materials.
3. Expression (highlighted in **blue**) – the extent to which your expression is clear, effective, and appropriate for scholarly writing.
4. Grammar, mechanics, APA (highlighted in **purple**) – the extent to which you have used correct grammar, word choice, punctuation, APA form and style, and APA formatting.

**C.** Your instructor will ignore criteria not relevant to an assignment (e.g., discussion posts and reflections need only follow APA formatting for citations and references).

**D.** Submission of an assignment that is outside of the page length (or slide number) parameters may result in a request for a re-submission that meets the parameters or a one step reduction of a grade (e.g., from A- to B+), at a faculty member's discretion.

### Faculty Use Only

<Faculty comments here>

Michael,

The revised problem statement demonstrates a problem identified as low reading scores by students in six through eighth grades. The consequence of the problem is that students fail to reach their full potential in life; this affects the possibility of persisting to graduation and possibly finding a job to be self-supportive. There is also the potential that the students will not contribute to society and may become a burden on society.

While working out the problem statement, begin with “the problem is....” When you reach the stage of working with a Dissertation Chair, you will most likely have a working problem statement and may be worded differently.

Assignment 5 demonstrated completing **all** required parts of the assignment, demonstrates **good** understanding of materials, uses **very** clear and effective expression appropriate to scholarly writing, and has **some** errors in grammar, mechanics, APA form and style, and APA formatting. Refer to the Reference and the revision to the last entry.

A 98% Dr. Oja 12 03 2014

<Faculty Name>

<Grade Earned>

<Writing Score>

<Date Graded>

#### Assignment 6 – Due Sunday, December 07, 2014

Using all the sources from the annotated bibliography you completed in a previous Week and your analysis of issues in your topic area, write a brief literature review. **An additional document is provided to clarify the literature review in addition to the resources on the syllabus.**

Your Concept Paper literature review is a **synthesis and integration** of fundamental and recent research and **theory** on your dissertation topic. Its main purpose is to show that you are familiar with key literature relevant to your research topic and to demonstrate that there is a gap in existing literature and research findings that your study will address. Use your work from Activity 4 to discuss and place your research problem in the context of issues in your topic area. **The introduction should clearly identify and be in alignment with the research topic and include the main points for discussion in the paper. Review the Concept Paper Template and Best Practices prior to writing the literature review for additional back information. If you are not familiar with opposing views on the research topic, search authors with opposing views and use compare/contrast for the discussion; this is a typical writing strategy used for discussion in a literature review. Identify the theory that supports the research topic and why the theory is the best choice and how it supports and validates the topic. Use APA form and style and formatting including second level headings to identify a change in subject. A well-developed paper should have approximately 20 sources and listed on a Reference list. Sources should be within five years unless identified as a seminal work.**

Your review should be a coherent, organized, and logical narrative that uses sources to argue that there is a meaningful gap in the current theory and research in your topic area that your study will address. Your review should be in the form of a conceptual arrow that points to the need for new research exactly the research that you propose!

Developing the Problem Statement and Research Questions

Michael Higley

Northcentral University

Developing the Problem Statement and Research Questions

**The Problem Statement**

Reading is an essential life skill, and when students are unable to read the effects are life-altering (Burke, Hagan-Burke, Kwok, & Parker, 2009). Tennessee was the fastest improving state from 2011-2013 (www.tn.gov, 2014). However, evaluation of disaggregated data from Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) and Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Reading Achievement scores in Clarksville<sup>[1]</sup>, Tennessee, revealed student populations in both regular and special education are making substantially less progress than the state Standard for Academic Growth in Reading (Tennessee Department of Education, 2014; TVAAS, 2014). Furthermore, students' Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) gains revealed students consistently performed below expectation in reading and were not demonstrating overall gains due to the inability to read grade level content area material.

The Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) continues to show a decline in reading scores, which reflect high numbers of at-risk students reading below grade level (TVAAS, 2014). Furthermore, achievement gaps in reading and the pressure to address these gaps by the state has increased rapidly since the implementation of Tennessee's new teacher evaluation model. Therefore<sup>[2]</sup>, the problem is the steady decline in TCAP Reading Achievement scores across CMCSS resulting in students in grades six to eight not reading at grade level (Tennessee Department of Education, 2014; TVAAS, 2014). If students do not read at grade level they may fail to reach their full potential in life.

Computer-assisted intervention programs have shown to improve reading literacy (Saine, Lerkkanen, Ahonen, Tolvanen, & Lyytinen, 2011). Additionally, research has revealed that a constructivist computer-assisted learning model increases students' knowledge construction and retention. In an effort to improve TCAP Reading Achievement scores in a local middle school in

Clarksville, Tennessee, school administrators have implemented two computer-assisted reading intervention programs to address at-risk student gaps in reading literacy.

### The Problem Statement

- Because the research study is in the concept paper stage, a highly detailed research design is not expected. The concept paper, however, provides a foundation for the next step in the dissertation process, the development of the proposal. A well-conceived and well written and researched concept paper serves as a foundation or blueprint for the remainder of dissertation work.
- In the concept paper include the proposed research method (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) and present a rationale for the appropriateness of the method and design.
- Include a brief discussion of why the method/design(s) is chosen over others. Discussion is not simply a listing and description of research designs; rather, elaboration demonstrates how the proposed method and design will accomplish the study goals, why the design is the optimum choice for the proposed research, and how the method aligns with the purpose and research questions.
- Be sure to provide a brief description of the proposed data collection and analysis procedures. Provide appropriate foundational support for the proposed study design. Be sure to include operational definitions (fully defined), and describe the measurement.

### Statement of the Problem

(Approximately 250 to 300 words) Articulation of a concise problem statement is the *key* to a successful proposal/dissertation manuscript and typically requires many revisions before the proposal is approved. The problem statement is a brief discussion of a problem or observation succinctly identifying and *documenting* the need for and importance of the study. Clearly describe and document the problem that prompted the study. Include appropriate published or relevant primary sources to document the existence of a problem worthy of doctoral level research. A lack of research alone is not a compelling problem (many things are not studied but do not necessarily warrant research).

The documented problem that is identified may be a practical problem or issue in the profession or study context for which there is not already an acceptable solution. In defining the problem a clear discrepancy must be drawn between that which exists currently and that which is desired. Although an applied study design does not necessarily require generalizability beyond the study site, worthy problems must be relevant and documented beyond any particular study site. To identify and articulate a problem, consider the potential negative consequences to the field or stakeholders if the proposed research is never conducted.

[Text... Present a general issue/observation that is grounded in the research literature and leads to the need for the study (in most cases scholarly citations within the last 5 years are required to document the general and specific problem). Follow with a focused, documented problem that directly reflects and leads to the need for a research response.]

*Note:* Ensure that the concepts presented in the problem statement *lead to and align directly with* the Purpose Statement. Use of a “logic” map is highly recommended in order to ensure direct alignment and avoid “surprises” among the key elements: problem → purpose → research questions → proposed method and design.

### **Substantiating the Problem Statement**

The Problem Statement developed above is within 250 to 300 words, with a total of 297 words. The concise problem described is the continued decline in middle school reading achievement scores as revealed by the TCAP Reading Achievement scores, as well as pressure by the state to decrease reading gaps due to its connection to teacher evaluations. Relevant Clarksville-Montgomery County School System student data was retrieved from Tennessee's TCAP and TVAAS websites to document the existence of a problem. The discrepancy between Tennessee's Standard for Academic Growth and student Reading Achievement scores revealed Clarksville-Montgomery County School System students were consistently below proficient in reading and were not demonstrating appropriate gains due to the inability to read grade level content area material.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed after review of current literature, they are:

- Q1.** Does the utilization of Scholastic *System 44* have a statistically significant impact on the TCAP Reading assessment NCE mean gain scores of Kenwood Middle School students participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model?
- Q2.** Does the utilization of Scholastic *System 44* have a statistically significant impact on TCAP Reading assessment NCE mean gain scores of Kenwood Middle School males participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to males participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model?
- Q3.** Does the utilization of Scholastic *System 44* have a statistically significant impact on TCAP Reading assessment NCE mean gain scores of Kenwood Middle School

females participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to females participating in the Scholastic *Read180* model?

**Q4.** Does the utilization of Scholastic *System 44* have a statistically significant impact on TCAP Reading assessment NCE mean gain scores of the majority of Kenwood Middle School students participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to the majority of students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model?

**Q5.** Does the utilization of Scholastic *System 44* have a statistically significant impact on TCAP Reading assessment NCE mean gain scores of the minority students at Kenwood Middle School participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to minority students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model?

## **Hypotheses**

Collecting Scholastic *System 44* and *Read 180* student data will serve to test the hypotheses. Each question addresses a null hypothesis with no expectation of a statistically significant relationship and an alternate hypothesis that proposes that a statistical difference does exist between the independent variables – Scholastic *System 44*, *Read 180*, gender, and ethnicity; and the dependent variable – student NCE assessment scores.

**H1<sub>0</sub>.** There is no statistically significant difference in the NCE mean gain scores of Kenwood Middle School students participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H1<sub>a</sub>.** There is a statistical difference in the NCE mean gain scores of Kenwood Middle School students participating in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H2<sub>0</sub>.** There is no statistically significant difference in the NCE mean gain score of Kenwood Middle School male students in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to male students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H2<sub>a</sub>.** There is a statistical difference in the NCE mean gain score of Kenwood Middle School male students in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to male students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H3<sub>0</sub>.** There is no statistically significant difference in the NCE mean gain score of Kenwood Middle School female students in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to female students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H3<sub>a</sub>.** There is a statistical difference in the NCE mean gain score of Kenwood Middle School female students in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to female students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H4<sub>0</sub>.** There is no statistically significant difference in the NCE mean gain score of the majority of Kenwood Middle School students in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to the majority of students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H4<sub>a</sub>.** There is a statistical difference in the NCE mean gain score of the majority of Kenwood Middle School students in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to the majority of students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H5<sub>0</sub>.** There is a statistical difference in the NCE mean gain score of the minority students at Kenwood Middle School in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to minority students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

**H5<sub>a</sub>.** There is a statistical difference in the NCE mean gain score of the minority students at Kenwood Middle School in the Scholastic *System 44* model as compared to minority students participating in the Scholastic *Read 180* model.

#### Research Questions

- Research questions must address the purpose of the study. Answering the questions must accomplish the study's purpose and contribute to addressing the problem.
- One must be able to trace all the ideas in the study questions back through the purpose statement to the problem statement. The research questions and the design and method should align. Once the problem and purpose is determined, then the research questions are established.
- Research questions are distinct and answerable, given the identified constructs/phenomenon and population.
- ....

#### Quantitative

- Research questions are included and the questions include corresponding proposed hypotheses.
- Research questions and hypotheses are aligned with the problem statement.

#### Research Questions

Before listing the research questions, introductory information should be presented in a discussion context. The research questions are to be distinct and *answerable*, given the identified constructs/phenomenon and population.

*Note:* Do not include specific interview or survey question/items here.

*Quantitative:* Research questions are included and the question list is followed by corresponding list of proposed hypothesis(es). Ensure the research questions and hypothesis(es) are aligned with the purpose statement. The research questions and hypotheses must be directly answerable, specific and testable based on the data collected. ....

[Text...Brief introductory text. *Note:* Avoid redundant text]

**Q1.**

**Q2.**

Additional questions as needed.

### References

- Burke, M. D., Hagan-Burke, S., Kwok, O., & Parker, R. (2009). Predictive validity of early literacy indicators from the middle of kindergarten to second grade. *Journal Of Special Education*, 42(4), 209-226. doi:10.1177/0022466907313347
- Saine, N. L., Lerkkanen, M., Ahonen, T., Tolvanen, A., & Lyytinen, H. (2011). Computer-assisted remedial reading intervention for school beginners at risk for reading disability. *Child Development*, 82(3), 1013-1028. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01580.x
- Serin, O. (2011). The effects of the computer-based instruction on the achievement and problem solving skills of the science and technology students. *Turkish Online Journal Of Educational Technology - TOJET*, 10(1), 183-201. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=a6e32b81-687e-4bd3-893b-3627336547d8%40sessionmgr4003&vid=5&hid=4105>
- | Tennessee Department of Education. (2014, July 13). 2014 TCAP district results [\[webpage\]](#). Retrieved from [http://www.tn.gov/education/data/tcap\\_2014\\_districts.shtml](http://www.tn.gov/education/data/tcap_2014_districts.shtml)
- | Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS). (2014). District value added: Montgomery county results [\[web\]](#). Retrieved from <https://tvaas.sas.com/valueAdded.html?as=b&aj=b&w4=9&x9=8&ww=175970&yb=32&x7=1>
- www.tn.gov. (2014, January 30). Annual joint report on pre-kindergarten through higher education in Tennessee. Retrieved from <http://www.tn.gov/thec/Legislative/Reports/2014/Joint%20Report%20Pre-K-Higher%20Ed%202014.pdf>
- A website is not an author. The report was compiled by the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (the authors).